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General Edward F. Jones

Read at a meeting of the

New York State Loyal Legion,

Held at Delmonico's,

New York. May 3, 1911.

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Commander and Companions:

My theme at this time is the Sixth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Militia, which was the first to offer its services and the first to respond to the call of President Lincoln for soldiers in defence of the Union.

The discovery of America by Christopher Columbus, the founding of the Colony at Jamestown, Va., the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock, the battles of Concord, Lexington and Bunker Hill and the Declaration of Independence are momentous epochs in the history of the United States.

At least of equal importance is the famous march of the Sixth Mass. Regiment through Baltimore on the 19th of April, 1861, and its arrival on the same evening, at Washington, thus saving the Capital from falling into the possession of the confederates.

Its story cannot too frequently be told. Its oft repetition is needed to indelibly imprint upon the pages of history the record of the most important event of the civil war. What would be thought of a history of the United States that omitted mention of Concord, Lexington and Bunker Hill?

At the November election of 1860, Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States.

On the 7th of November the Legislature of South Carolina issued a call for a convention, which, at Charleston on the 21st of December, passed an ordinance declaring South Carolina to be an independent Commonwealth.

On the 14th of January, 1861, General Butler, who was in command of the 3d Brigade Mass. Volunteer Militia, called upon Colonel Jones, commanding the Sixth Regiment, and requested that he go with him to see Governor Andrew, remarking, "Andrew and I are not very good friends, and you may have more influence with him than I. I want to impress upon him the necessity of having some troops ready to meet the emergency which I know is coming. The South is attempting secession, and if the North is not ready they will get an advantage which it will be difficult for us to overcome".

They went to the State House and had a long conference with Governor Andrew, at which time Colonel Jones informally tendered the services of his regiment.

On January 16th, General Order No. 4 was issued.

"Headquarters, Boston, Jan. 16, 1861.

"General Order No. 4

"Events which have recently occurred, and are now in progress, require that Massachusetts should be at all times ready to furnish her quota of troops upon any requisition of the President of the United States to aid in the maintenance of the laws and the peace of the Union.

His Excellency, the Commander-in-Chief, therefore orders:

That the commanding officer of each company of volunteer militia examine with care the roll of his company, cause the name of each member, together with his rank and place of residence, to be properly recorded and a copy of the same to be forwarded to the office of the Adjutant General. Previous to which, commanders of companies shall make strict inquiry whether there are men in their commands, who, from age, physical defect, business or family causes, may be unable or indisposed to respond at once to the orders of the Commander-in-Chief made in response to the call of the President of the United States; that they be forthwith discharged, so that their places may be filled by men ready for any public exigency which may arise, whenever called upon."

On the 21st of January, a meeting of the commissioned officers of the regiment was held at the American House, Lowell, at which, the situation of the country was fully discussed and the following resolution unanimously adopted:

"Resolved. That Colonel Jones be authorized and requested, forthwith, to tender the services of the Sixth Regiment to the Commander-in-Chief and Legislature, when such service may become desirable, for the purpose contemplated in General Order No. 4."

On the 4th of March Abraham Lincoln was peacefully inaugurated President of the United States, although the entire South had threatened that this should never occur.

The next important move in the scheme of secession was the firing upon Fort Sumpter on April 12th.

On the 15th of April, 1861, President Lincoln issued a call for 75,000 men to rally in defence of the Union. The people were unwilling to believe in the possibility of secession,

thinking that the overt acts were only blustering maneuvers on the part of the South, and that the call for troops was ridiculously large. Even Secretary of State Seward said that the trouble would be over in 90 days. Governor Andrew of Massachusetts fully appreciated the situation and took measures at once to have in readiness the quota of that State.

Immediately upon the publication of President Lincoln's proclamation, the commander of the Sixth Regiment went to the State House in Boston, and received from Adjutant-General Schouler this memorandum order, which was hastily written, and afterward duplicated more formally

"Headquarters, Boston, April 15, 1861.

"Special Order No 14

"To Col Edward F. Jones,

"Com. Sixth Regt. Infantry.

"You are hereby ordered to muster the regiment under your command, in uniform, on Boston Common, forthwith, in compliance with a requisition made by the President of the United States. The troops are to go to Washington.

By order of His Excellency John A. Andrew, Governor and Commander-in Chief

"William Schouler,

Adjutant-General "

On the receipt of this order, at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, Colonel Jones used the telegraph wires to the fullest possible extent, ordering his captains to assemble their companies at Huntington Hall, Lowell, the next morning at nine o'clock. Then going to Lowell, spent the entire night in rallying his command, which in many instances required special messengers riding all night. There was hardly a member of the regiment who did not report for duty.

Then it was that history repeated itself, for, like Paul Revere, on the 18th of April, 1775, there were those who were

"Ready to ride and spread the alarm

Through every Middlesex village and farm,

For the country folk to be up and to arm "

It was not a single horseman like Paul Revere who rode alone that night, but the telegraph, the locomotive and a score of special messengers "spread the alarm through every Middlesex village and farm," for

"Through the gloom and the light

The fate of a Nation was riding that night."

The repetition of history did not end here, as men composing the regiment were to a great extent descendants of those Revolutionary sires who, on the morning of April, 19th 1775, left their plows in the furrow, hastened home, took down their old flint lock muskets from the hooks on the chimney, grasped their powder horn and bullet pouch, and with a hasty good-bye, hurried away, many of them never to return.

In fact, one of the members of Co. E, responding to President Lincoln's call, Luke Smith by name, was a son of one of those Revolutionary sires.

The scene at Huntington Hall, Lowell, where the regiment assembled, on the morning of the 16th of April 1861, was one impossible to describe. Before the order "fall in" was given, it was a motley assemblage of men in uniform, their parents, wives, children, sisters, sweethearts, and a general public, massed to the extent of the entire square, all with anxious faces and many tearful eyes. It was touching to see the mingled pride and sorrow in so many sweet faces. No wonder that they were all anxious, for they had but a vague conception of future probabilities.

"Fall in" was the order, and while a hasty inspection was being made, the band played "The Girl I Left Behind Me."

At twelve o'clock noon the regiment reported for duty on Boston Common, having been rallied from more than twenty-five county districts.

On the evening of the 17th the regiment left Boston for Washington. The transit through New England to New York, and thence to Philadelphia, was night and day one continuous ovation.

Bonfire succeeded bonfire so closely that each might have almost ignited its follower leaving a trail of ashes two hundred miles in length. Peal rang from steeple to steeple, an unending chime, and the boom of cannon and the rattle of musketry premonished the battles real that were so soon to follow.

At Philadelphia it was rumored that the regiment would not be permitted to march peacefully through Baltimore. At Havre de Grace the rumor changed to a fact. It was to be attacked.

This led the Commander to pass through the train, and in the centre of each car, to issue this order:

"The regiment will march through Baltimore in column of sections, arms at will. You will undoubtedly be insulted, abused, and perhaps assaulted, to which pay no regard whatever; but march with your faces square to the front, and pay no attention to the mob, even though they throw stones, bricks or other missiles; but if you are fired upon, and anyone is hit, your officers will order you to fire. Do not fire into any promiscuous crowds; but select any man whom you see aiming, and be sure you drop him."

Twenty rounds of ball cartridges were issued to each man.

The train reached Baltimore earlier than was expected, and without any notice of change of plan, an attempt was made to draw the cars through the city with horses, as was the practice at that time.

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The events of that day are familiar historical incidents; the bloody attack by a vicious mob, its repulse, the killing of four and the wounding of thirty-six comrades.

Though many of the participants are now living, after the lapse of half a century, we vainly search for the knowledge that will enable us to fitly honor the memory of Charles A. Taylor, the first who fell in the terrible conflict which continued for nearly five years, sacrificing a million lives and costing billions of treasure.

Charles A. Taylor was the first martyr who gave his life in defence of the Union.

Dew on the blade of grass condenses into a drop and descends to the earth, forming the tiny beck, the head of the stream. So it was with Taylor's life current. It was the tiny beck, the head of the stream combined with the flow from the bodies of Needham, Ladd and Whitney, formed the rill, which, swollen from the veins and arteries of his 36 wounded comrades, made, figuratively speaking, the river of blood that flowed through our country, inciting every patriot to fly to the rescue.

Governor Andrew telegraphed the Mayor of Baltimore, "I pray you to cause the bodies of the Massachusetts soldiers, dead in Baltimore, to be immediately laid out and tenderly sent forward by express to me". In accordance with this dispatch, the bodies of Needham, Ladd and Whitney were tenderly cared for and returned to Boston.

(At this point in the reading of the paper, the Rev. G. Tabor Thompson, D. D., of Philadelphia, sang the following:)

SEND THEM HOME TENDERLY.

(By H. A. Dobson)

Send them home tenderly:
Guard them with care,
Eager eyes tearfully,
Watch for them there;
Home hearts are mournfully
Throbbing to know
Gifted and manly sons,
Stricken so low.

Send them home tenderly:
To the fair sod,
First by the martyr-soul'd
Puritans trod;
Blue hills and ocean wave
Echo the prayer,
Send them home tenderly,
Love waits them there.

Send them home tenderly:
Poor breathless clay;
Yet, what high hopefulness
Bore them away;
Hand to hand clingly,
Linked in brave trust—
Tenderly, tenderly
Bear home their dust.

Send them home tenderly:
Think of the sire
Struggling with mighty sobs
By the low fire;
Think how a mother's heart
Hourly hath bled;
Tenderly, tenderly,
Bear home her dead.

The body of Charles A. Taylor was not in uniform and not recognized as a soldier. What became of it has for half a century been a matter of unconfirmed tradition. His whole story is a pathetic incident. As the regiment was leaving Boston, he, a stranger enlisted therein. The regiment had been warned by General Order. Had tendered its services and were expectant of the call. Taylor was under no obligation beyond that of every patriotic citizen.

From whence he came was unknown. In two short days he passed into eternity and oblivion, the first to fall.

Who was Charles A. Taylor? The most strenuous efforts have failed to locate his relatives here, and an appeal into the realms of the wireless has been equally unsuccessful. No response comes to the call, who was Charles A. Taylor. Is there no answering soul? Had he no father or mother, brother, sister or sweetheart, who to the call would answer, "he was mine?" It is indeed a sad, sad story.

He was not the only one, for Needham, Ladd and Whitney quickly followed the path of death, and thirty-six of his comrades were wounded, victims of a brutality seldom recorded.

During the half century since the death of Taylor, from time to time, desultory efforts have been made to trace his body to its final resting place, but not until within the last twelve months has the matter been systematically and persistently pursued. It might almost be said that every person now living in Baltimore who had personal knowledge of the tragedy of the 19th of April, 1861, has been searched out and cross examined, with the result that the fact is established that Taylor's body was thrown into the canal, taken there from by a loyal citizen by the name of Levin Gorsuch, and buried in his private lot in the now abandoned cemetery at East Baltimore. At the head of his grave was placed a board containing the legend, "Killed in the Riot, April 19, 1861." Gorsuch was very proud of having performed this patriotic act, and during his lifetime decorated the grave on Memorial Day. In the abandonment of the cemetery as a burial place, the exact location of Taylor's grave has been lost.

It has often been asked, reflecting on the conduct, awe, and the courage of the commander of the Sixth Massachusetts Regiment, why retribution did not follow at once.

Colonel Jones who stood on the rear platform of the train, facing acres of raving maniacs whose bodies wedged the car, knew no fear, for he was unconscious of danger. A ruffian who mounted the steps, brandishing a revolver in his face, seeing that he aroused no interest, slunk back into the crowd. Why? Why did he not fire? A Providence beyond our comprehension controlled.

The commander was thinking, not of himself, but how could he meet the responsibility of the moment. He was confronted by the greatest problem of his life. What ought he to do? What could he do?

The blood of his dead and wounded comrades appealed for revenge. The taunts and sneers of the mad mob goaded him, and every instinct of manhood urged him, to deal fearful vengeance. But his orders were to "get to Washington as quickly as possible." He did not dare to consult his officers, for he knew that they and the men were eager for retribution. At this critical moment a telegram was handed him from General Scott. It was brief. "Let nothing delay you."

A soldier's duty is to obey orders.

This necessity which brooked no denial forced a departure from the scene of the bloody conflict, leaving their dead.

After anxious hours, momentarily fearing disaster, the regiment reached Washington. As the commander stepped from the train he was met by President Lincoln, who eagerly grasped his hand and said "Thank God, you are here. If you had not arrived to-night, we should have been in the hands of the rebels before morning."

It was related that hours before the regiment's arrival, President Lincoln had been walking his chamber, repeating, "Why don't they come? Why don't they come? Will they never come?"

Let us consider these events, more important than has generally been acknowledged, from the fact that they were so quickly followed by others apparently of greater magnitude.

The crack of the rifles at Baltimore was drowned by the artillery at Bull Run.

The 724 men who headed the column in defence of the Union were lost in the count of the million who followed so soon.

The shots that were fired and the blood that was shed in the streets of Baltimore on that eventful day, did more for the cause of free government than any previous event in the world's history.

The blood of the martyrs was indeed the seed of the church.

Was it an anniversary echo of the shot that was heard 'round the world?

This pioneer regiment was for the time being forgotten, which is not surprising, as the tide of events rolled in so rapidly. Billow rose upon billow, and unlike the waves of the sea, did not recede. Hundreds of thousands of comrades marched over the bodies of these brave dead, grinding them into the dust of forgetfulness.

History fails to recognize the emergent services that the Sixth Massachusetts Regiment rendered to its country.

Companions, have you ever given a moment's thought to the change in the situation had not the Sixth Massachusetts Regiment reached Washington on the evening of the 19th of April, 1861.

President Lincoln said "We should have been in the hands of the rebels before morning."

That meant the President of the United States and his Cabinet slain or hostages in the hands of the enemy.

That meant the capital of our country in the possession of the confederates, who would have received prompt recognition from European governments which were only waiting for an excuse.

Companions, this meant the glorious old stars and stripes, flag of our Union, hauled down, trodden under foot, and floating in its place the stars and bars of the confederacy, tainting the pure breezes of liberty.

That meant the State of Maryland seceded from the Union; the early battles of the war fought north instead of south of the Potomac; the battle of Bull Run, with all its misfortunes many times multiplied, fought on Pennsylvania soil; Philadelphia and New York attacked, if not captured, and the ultimate result, a divided country, with all of the misery that the triumph of the confederacy would have entailed, a continuous conflict along Mason and Dixon's line, and the perpetuation of that curse, human slavery.

The historians of the great civil war have not accorded to the Sixth Massachusetts Regiment the credit to which it is entitled.

The importance of its service cannot be magnified. It should not be under rated. That the success of the march saved the capital, no one can gainsay. That it preserved the Union is equally true.

Companions, a half century has passed since the first blood of the civil war was shed in defence of the Union.

Most of those who touched elbows in that fatal march have been mustered out of service here.

The right wing of the regiment is marking time in the great beyond, waiting for the rear of the column to close up.

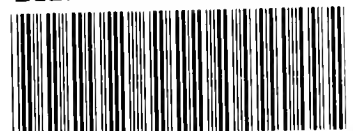
They will not have to wait long, for we are on the double quick.

Therefore, Companions, it behooves each of us waiting detail to make the most of our opportunities in fraternity, charity and loyalty.

Companions, have I claimed too much for the old Sixth Massachusetts?

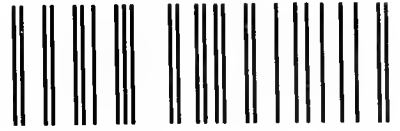
Hearty response from the Commandry of "No" "No" "No"

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